

Matwatch '94

Steve

Beverly

The Jerry Lawler odyssey is over---or is it?

By the time you read this, Lawler is probably counting the days until his return to the World Wrestling Federation and the most sustained national exposure of his career (never mind the Andy Kaufman shenanigans of the early '80s).

In my opinion, Jerry Lawler is a very lucky man. I hope he knows it. But his conduct of the last four months while under indictment certainly raise doubts as to that effect.

Under the laws of this country, Lawler is innocent of charges of rape and sodomy of a Kentucky teenager. Certainly, if you spend time in the Museum of Decadent Society, namely America's daytime talk shows, you see other cases of false sex charges trumped up by child or teen accusers, which on occasion are manipulated by psychologists or outside influences.

However, in the mid-1970s to early 1980s, I covered an extensive number of child court cases for WTVM and WRBL-TV in Columbus, Ga. Never did I see one take the bizarre turns of the Lawler saga. Never did I witness as many pendulum-swinging manipulations of the court system. Never did I see as many coincidental sidebar developments. Never did I see such a willful and skillful public relations campaign as that of Lawler during these last four months. Further, never have I seen law enforcement agencies and prosecutors caught more flat-footed in zeroing in on what they originally proclaimed a confident case.

Forever will remain a mystery why Lawler's case went all the way to a multiple felony indictment and only nine days later (after months of investigation covering two states), the prime accuser in the case changed her story.

Inexplicable to my mind is why the teenager in manipulating the court system---at a major expense to taxpayers---isn't being prosecuted for perjury before a grand jury. This country has to begin teaching its youth serious lessons about responsibility---and abuse of the courts is about as irresponsible as one can get.

(Continued on Page 2)

Key Charges Dropped

Lawler: 'Just Glad It's Over'



After four months of a legal barbell hanging over his head, Jerry Lawler appears to be on track for a summer return to the World Wrestling Federation, thanks to a Louisville, Ky. judge.

Last Wednesday, four charges of second-degree statutory rape and sodomy against Lawler were dropped. However, as part of a plea bargain agreement, the 44-year-old Memphis veteran admitted guilt to a misdemeanor charge of harassing a grand jury witness, one of two teenagers who originally accused Lawler of the sexual incidents. Lawler was sentenced to one year in jail but the sentence was suspended. Lawler was given a two-year "conditional discharge" by Jefferson County Circuit Court Judge Earl O'Bannon, which is an unsupervised probation. Lawler will not have to report to a probation officer but is ordered to have no contact with any government witnesses in the case for two years. If Lawler complies and does not violate any other law, the conviction will be removed from his record in the year 1999, under terms of the court agreement. Lawler also pays a \$1,000 fine.

As detailed in the previous two issues of *Matwatch '93* and *Matwatch '94*, the Lawler saga began Nov. 12 when he was indicted on the charges sur-rounding alleged incidents June 6 and July 7 in Louisville hotels, according to grand jury testimony. A 13-year-old girl who regularly attended Lawler's USWA bouts in Louisville accused Lawler of having sex with her and a 14-year-old companion, saying the acts occurred while the threesome watched cartoons. According to reports of WLKY-TV in Louisville, the teenager later testified Lawler took the girls to Taco Bell and Value City.

Lawler openly proclaimed his innocence on the day of the indictment and immediately began a high-profile public campaign to amplify his charity work in the Memphis area and, over the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons, took to his USWA Championship Wrestling program over a five-week period to show his positive interaction with Memphis-area youngsters and at veterans' hospitals. Lawler also accused prosecutor Lisa Schweikert of being politically-motivated in pursuing the allegations. However, Lawler lost his coveted spot with the World Wrestling Federation, being placed in an "on hiatus" status on the day of the indictments.

Only nine days after the indictment, Lawler's attorney William Massey announced he had obtained a five-page signed statement from the girl and her mother absolving Lawler of the charges. Massey said he had visited the family in Louisville "at their request." Yet, the case dragged on more than three months while Schweikert continued her pursuit of a conviction.

In the Feb. 23 hearing to determine if Lawler would face a scheduled April 5 trial date, his attorneys entered the sworn statement from the girl and moved for dismissal, claiming Schweikert and police investigators during late December had unethically obtained a search warrant to seize tapes of phone conversations between Lawler and the girl's family.

The hearing lasted four-and-a-half hours. At a midday recess, Schweikert proposed the plea bargain, which she told *The Commercial Appeal* of Memphis was "a meeting of the minds among the parties that serves justice."

(Continued on Page 2)

SPECIAL NOTICE

This issue of *Matwatch '94* was delayed in publication until Feb. 26 in order to bring final coverage of the Lawler case. A second *Matwatch '94* will be published in mid-March.

Steve Beverly (Continued from Page 1)

I have seen legal manipulations. But how on earth does a 27-year-old boyfriend of the sister of one of the two accusing teenagers control the youngsters to the degree he forces them to fabricate a story which leads to such specific detail in testimony to police and grand jurors? And if—as we have been repeatedly told by Lawler and his attorney—police and prosecutors pursued this case to indictments as a catalyst of this 27-year-old, who is now an accused rapist, one has to wonder if the Louisville authorities are not the most inept at their jobs since the Keystone Cops. At least one ponders how many similar cases are being investigated on the word of tenuous evidence. Many child crime units nationwide are under the microscope for probing abuse cases without adequate evidence (i.e., a number of these special units are funded by state and federal government grants based on numbers of convictions, etc.).

Don't forget the original accusers also manipulated the Louisville media, which aired their story with disguised identities and voices. If this affair was an act, this family should be nominated for an Emmy.

One also has to ask how quick Lawler would have been to show his extensive charity work with children, his speaking at schools and his visits to Veterans' Administration hospitals on his weekly TV show if he weren't under the darkest cloud of his career. His personal p.r. machine was more self-serving, if not blatant, than Vince McMahon's efforts at on-air self-congratulation during the height of the federal investigation into him and his organization.

The prosecutor in this case, Lisa Schweikert, also is a puzzle here. Either she was desperate, or she truly believed two-and-two weren't adding up with this story change by continuing the case at public expense long after Lawler's attorney had obtained a signed affidavit from the prime accuser clearing Lawler. Indiana authorities, who were also investigating charges against Lawler, dropped their probe before Christmas, citing lack of a material witness.

I never bought Lawler's claim of this developing from "exaggerated girl talk" about sexual conquests. That's too convenient. Particularly when a second, preliminary wrestler was originally implicated, as well. I also never bought into his charges Schweikert was attempting to make political hay at his expense. That's too risky for any prosecutor without adequate evidence because such a strategy could backfire at the polls. Lawler was likely overestimating his Louisville celebrity status, which doesn't come close to approaching his hero worship in hometown Memphis.

Here's another question: despite Lawler's public explanation as to why—why was he harassing a material witness in this case by telephone, a charge to which he has pleaded guilty? This is the one indictment most analysts discounted from the start, yet it's the one for which Lawler pays his lone penalty.

It may be the cynic in me which occasionally surfaces. But it's still hard to believe all of the questions have been answered in this case and experience tells me many never will be. Jerry Lawler should be happy. He didn't dodge a bullet. He dodged a bazooka.

Steve Beverly

Lawler Saga (Continued from Page 2)

Massey said the deal was "an offer that resolved the major parts of this case, such that Mr. Lawler wanted it to be over. This is a hard thing to live with." If Lawler had not accepted the plea bargain, the case could have been continued by the Commonwealth of Kentucky for as long as a year-and-a-half with appeals, even if Lawler had won dismissal. Massey added, "It just wasn't worth that grief. We were pleased to reach an end to this. It's an end we can live with."

Lawler still professed innocence concerning the harassment charge, even after the decision was reached. "I told them all along I had talked with the girl and her mother over the telephone. I called them," Lawler told reporters. "They called me. I didn't realize at the time that was wrong. As far as the rape and sodomy charges, they're gone and that's great."

"Nobody can imagine what something like this is like, to have this hanging over your head. It's like a dark cloud. It goes on so long you think there's never going to be an end to this."
---Jerry Lawler

Massey entered the affidavit Wednesday from the girl absolving Lawler of the charges. The two teenagers had also written to O'Bannon, asking for him to free Lawler.

In the affidavit, the girl who was the listed victim said she fabricated the story after being pressured by 27-year-old John Segevan, whom she said was a boyfriend of her sister's. The girl

said Segevan became jealous and over-protective of her and accused her of "messing around with wrestlers." Segevan is said to be the one whom originally tipped police investigators to the case and, along with the girl, was interviewed in disguise by CBS affiliate WLKY-TV, which broke the story last November.

Ironically, until the plea bargain, the latest development in this bizarre case occurred Feb. 15 when Segevan was arrested and charged with the alleged forcible rape of a 15-year-old Louisville girl. Police say Segevan committed the rape on Thanksgiving night after offering the girl a ride home from a church dance. During the Wednesday hearing, Massey suggested Segevan's arrest damaged his credibility as a witness. Massey also moved for dismissal of the charges, contending Schweikert was guilty of "outrageous government conduct" in the obtaining of a search warrant in December to gain access to taped phone conversations between Lawler and one of the teens and her mother.

The court decision was not the lead story on any Memphis television station last Wednesday night. The stations are all covering a high-profile murder trial in a nearby Arkansas city, which involves an alleged cult killing. None of the stations had interviews with Lawler, who left the courthouse immediately by plane to make his scheduled USWA wrestling card in Evansville, Ind. He did tell Memphis newspaper writer Michael Kelley, in a telephone interview, "I'm tickled to death to have this over with. Nobody can imagine what something like this is hanging over your head. It's like a dark cloud. It goes on so long you think there's never going to be an end to this."

Lawler told Kelley it was "too early to tell" if he would return to the WWF. However, sources close to Lawler indicate he has already been contacted about returning at *Wrestlemania X*, ostensibly to interfere in the Lex Luger-Bret Hart WWF title match and to become a tag team partner of Owen Hart as a new twist to the Lawler-Hart family feud angle which was interrupted last fall. Lawler reportedly had been told to prepare for a June return if his case had gone to the April trial and he had been acquitted. Ironically, WWF owner Vince McMahon did not similarly remove himself from the air when he was indicted on federal charges one week after Lawler's indictments. Lawler is expected to rejoin McMahon on the color mike on *Superstars of Wrestling*.

The 14-time USWA "unified world" champion told Kelley he did not plan any public appearances in Memphis until the Saturday wrestling show on WMC-TV. A summary of Lawler's remarks to his television audience is listed on page 6.



HEADLINES

Ross: To Decide Future Soon

WILTON CT—Veteran commentator Jim Ross, whose World Wrestling Federation contract expires this month, is expected to decide his future within a matter of days.

Ross, who was diagnosed in mid-February with Bell's Palsy, a disease which temporarily paralyzes the muscular functions and motor nerves of the face (see page 6), has been absent from his *WWF Wrestling Challenge* emcee slot since being stricken.

A comment from WCW's Tony Schiavone on the Atlanta announcer's weekly hotline segment Feb. 22 fueled speculation Ross was in the Atlanta WCW office seeking a return. Ross has not denied exploring employment possibilities but Schiavone's claim could not be substantiated.

WWOR Explores Titan Situation

SECAUCUS, N.J.—Superstation WWOR has explored the Titan Sports legal dilemma in a seven-minute report Feb. 25 on its 9 *News New York* with Brenda Blackmon.

In the report, veteran mat analyst John Arezzi offered criticism of Titan's business practices, while long-time personality Lou Albano, who was highly-critical of Titan in the late 1980s, said: "I've been in the WWF for 30 years. I'll be at *Wrestlemania*. We're gonna be just fine."

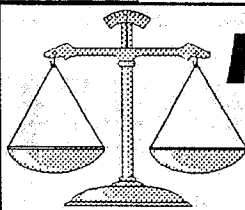
Along with the impact of the indictments against Vince McMahon and Titan, the report focused on the two-year decline in stations carrying WWF syndicated shows, estimating the drop "from more than 300 stations in the U.S. and Canada to fewer than 170."

Superbrawl Buy-Rate Rests at 0.45

ATLANTA—Cablevision Industries estimates the buy-rate for *Superbrawl IV* at 0.45 per cent, or 102-105,000 homes.

Southeastern manager Kim Kersey says an analyst of major cable markets placed a majority of the buys in World Championship Wrestling's traditional stronghold of eight southern states.

Official totals are not final until mid-April but major markets are a reasonable gauge of the subscription rate. If the figure holds, WCW will gross an estimated \$2.6 million from the show, of which approximately \$800,000 is the mat office's share.



MATWATCH '93 EDITORIALS

A VOTE FOR HEENAN

Say what you will about the rollercoaster departures of personnel from the World Wrestling Federation for Atlanta. However, unquestionably the top pickup for WCW has been Bobby Heenan.

In five short weeks, Heenan has demonstrated why he is the best at what he does. He has the ability to mix inoffensive one-liners with enough mat analysis to improve the quality of any play-by-play announcer. At *Clash of the Champions* in January, Heenan elevated Gordon Solie to a level the veteran master has not achieved since the early 1980s. At *Superbrawl IV*, Heenan made the pas-sive Tony Schiavone appear at a higher plane until several late-event lapses of profusive overrating the quality of the pay-per-view and its early bouts and performers.

Heenan has already demonstrated why he should be the number one color commentator for WCW, particularly on the flagship series *WCW Saturday Night*. Jesse Ventura has merely loafed and coasted on his self-inflated star status. With Heenan on board, *Matwatch '94* casts an unequivocal vote for leaving Heenan on the "A" team of TBS and leaving Ventura to Sundays and syndication. After all, aren't you supposed to showcase your best in your highest-profile slots?

SPEAKING OF ANNOUNCERS....

Here is a simple suggestion for something intelligent, sensible and a good business move. Which means it probably won't be done. *Matwatch '94* calls on the decisionmakers at World Championship Wrestling to lay down their office politics, their professional jealousies and the monumental egos of portions of this so-called million-dollar announce team. How?

The contract of an announcer who never should have been allowed to leave WCW is about to expire with the World Wrestling Federation. At that point, the man is a free agent. He has prominence, name recognition and only happens to be regarded as the industry's flagship commentator.

In the last year, in a number of key markets, the *WWF Wrestling Challenge* show has drawn higher local ratings than *Superstars of Wrestling*. The announcers on that show: Jim Ross and Bobby Heenan. They worked well together, as they did on two WWF pay-per-views and several radiocasts of WWF extravaganzas.

In our view, WCW should admit its mistake and do what is correct for business and viewers: do whatever it takes to bring back Ross, pair him with Heenan on Saturday nights and let the ego-driven crybabies stew.

ON A POSITIVE NOTE...

While battling mounds of scandal with the recent Jerry Lawler trial and difficult negotiations over its contract renewal on WMC-TV, *USWA Championship Wrestling* has made a positive move and is showcasing it well.

The idea for a special *Memphis Monday Memories* show has been in the germination stage for a couple of years. But the USWA group is showing signs of building its legends card next week in a fashion superior to what WCW did last year with its first *Slamboree*.

Most impressive are video clips of classic matches and television bouts through the 45-year TV history of wrestling in Memphis. The idea of a Mid-South Coliseum Wrestling Hall of Fame is long overdue to honor legendary competitors and commentators who wrote mat history in Memphis.

Matwatch '94 salutes the Jarrett Promotions company on its *Monday Memories* celebration and urges production of a keepsake video for collectors to highlight the classic TV moments portrayed in the last month.

THE REAL WRESTLING HOTLINE

OPTION 1

Dave Meltzer M-W-F

Steve Beverly Tu-Sa

Scott Hudson Thu

Mark Madden Su

1-900-903-9030

THE RATINGS PAGE

CABLE WRESTLING RATINGS

Jan. Averages Rating/Share Total Homes Nov. Avg.

Monday Night Raw	3.3/4.8	2.04 million	3.0/4.5
WCW Sat. Night	2.4/4.6	1.48 million	2.2/4.3
WWF All-American	2.1/4.9	1.33 million	2.1/5.4
WCW Main Event	1.8/2.9	1.11 million	1.8/3.3
WCW Power Hour	1.5/5.4	930,000	1.4/5.4
WWF Mania	1.4/4.2	875,000	1.4/4.6

Week Ending Jan. 3 Rating/Share Total Homes N. Rank

Monday Night Raw	2.5/3.8	1.53 million	29
WCW Sat. Night	1.9/4.0	1.18 million	
WCW Power Hour	1.4/5.2	868,000	
WWF Mania	1.1/2.7	688,000	

Week Ending Jan. 10

Monday Night Raw	3.4/5.0	2.14 million	T2
WWF All-American	2.4/5.8	1.51 million	29
WCW Saturday Night	2.3/4.4	1.43 million	31
WCW Main Event	2.1/3.6	1.29 million	39
WCW Power Hour	1.6/5.7	992,000	
WWF Mania	1.4/4.3	875,000	

Week Ending Jan. 17

Monday Night Raw	3.3/5.4	2.25 million	6
WCW Saturday Night	2.5/4.7	1.55 million	26
WWF All-American	2.0/4.6	1.25 million	40
WCW Power Hour	1.8/6.6	1.12 million	
WWF Mania	1.6/5.5	1.00 million	
WCW Main Event	1.5/2.4	930,000	

Week Ending Jan. 24

Monday Night Raw	3.5/4.9	2.19 million	7
WCW Saturday Night	2.4/4.6	1.49 million	32
WWF All-American	1.9/4.1	1.19 million	
WWF Mania	1.8/5.5	1.13 million	
WCW Main Event	1.8/2.8	1.12 million	
WCW Power Hour	1.2/4.5	744,000	

Week Ending Jan. 31

Monday Night Raw	3.3/4.5	2.06 million	6
WCW Saturday Night	2.8/5.1	1.74 million	22
WWF All-American	2.2/4.9	1.38 million	35
WCW Power Hour	1.4/5.0	870,000	
WWF Mania	1.3/3.6	814,000	

Specials

Clash of the Champions (TBS 1/27)	3.5/5.0	2.22 million	6
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A RAW RECORD

The success of *Monday Night Raw* was never more capstoned than with its record-setting performance in January, averaging a 3.3 rating and 4.8 share of audience for the month. Among the standard-shattering stats: the 3.6 on Jan. 17 was the top score for any weekly series in more than three years and the 3.3 monthly average was the highest for a regular show since the 3.8 average for *NWA Main Event* in February 1990.

The 2.04 million homes made *Raw* the most-viewed cable mat series over a one-month period since the Turner Sunday series four years ago, which averaged 2.07 million homes. *Raw* is on pace to eclipse the quarterly average record for the 1990s (*Main Event* ratings eventually fell and slipped to a 2.9 quarterly mark).

For WCW, *Saturday Night* was up 9% in rating over year-ago figures but *Main Event* slipped 10% from January 1993 when TBS was running its series of Ric Flair classic bouts in the early part of the month.

Of note in the morning race, *WWF Mania* reached a million homes or more twice for the first time and broke its all-time high with a 1.8 Jan. 22.

ALL-NIGHT GAMBLE

In the last several years, TBS has presented all-night marathons of everything from *The Three Stooges* to *Saved By the Bell*. Saturday night (Mar. 5), the superstation takes perhaps its largest marathon gamble of all.

All Night at the Clash is said in TBS media releases to "celebrate six years of *Clash of the Champions* specials." The broadcast will begin at approximately 12 midnight (or immediately after the movie *The Vikings* and will continue until 6 a.m. Without doubt, the shows will contain an abundance of Jim Ross commentary, as the former WCW anchor hosted every *Clash of the Champions* except the first three and the last four.

Could this be an annual affair? If the ratings are good, maybe. TBS is usually pleased with a 1.0-1.5 for its all-night marathons. More than likely, this one will outpoint *The Banana Splits Marathon* of New Year's night.

FINAL NOTES

The addition of *Eastern Championship Wrestling* (Tuesdays, 11 p.m., ET) to the Channel America lineup is welcome and talk continues of the World Wrestling Network joining the low-power and small-town independent network this fall.... Time switch in Denver: *WWF Wrestling Challenge* to 11 p.m. Saturdays on KMGH.... Jim Cornette has done some of the classic interviews of his career to plug his upcoming Atlanta extravaganza on *The Joe Picicino Saturday Night Wrestling Machine*.... The Bushwhackers' appearance on ABC's *Family Matters* may have been the worst example of scripting a wrestling storyline into a sitcom. One would think the writers would at least have been consistent enough to make the 'Whackers babyfaces. Instead, they were heels taking on Carl and Steve Urkel in an absolutely far-fetched premise. Don't bother waiting on the rerun.... ABC's *20/20* reprised a two-year-old story on anabolic steroids Feb. 25 opposite Nancy Kerrigan's silver medal performance. Included was a review of the death of former Florida champion Ed (The Bull) Gantner and an interview with his mother, who described her son as "out of control".... The WCW gang's Feb. 21 stint on Group W's *Vicki* was perhaps its best national showcasing yet. But for any mark buying the pay-per-view the night before, one had to be asking how Sting could take a Rude awakening and the next day stand pleasantly side-by-side with Rick.

MATWATCH '94 SUBSCRIPTIONS

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THE REAL WRESTLING HOTLINE

Option 2

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**THEY
SAID IT!!!**

The Best of January/February

1. Jim Cornette, *Smoky Mt.*: "I went down a list of wrestlers from the WWF who are available to me—and even WCW, what little they have." 2. Eddie Gilbert, *USWA*, "Jerry Lawler's taken more money from people than Bill Clinton will this year." 3. Jerry Lawler, *USWA*: "I've faced a lot of opponents in my career—Austin Idol, Bill Dundee, Eddie Gilbert—but you don't know what tough is until you stand before the Commonwealth of Kentucky." 4. Bobby Heenan, *Superbrawl IV*, "Maybe Terry Taylor could get a discount rate for surgery at the hospital, since his aunt is there. You know—Liz Taylor?" 5. Heenan, *Superbrawl*: "I can't believe Bockwinkel would make such a snap decision. Who does he think he is, Bill Clinton?" 6. Heenan, *Superbrawl*: "I think Missy's at the Mayo Clinic having her gums repaired. Cactus Jack kissed her at the *Clash*." 7. Vince McMahon, *Monday Night Raw*, on Tommy Angel vs. Adam Bomb: "Angel could take a page from Michael Jackson and try to settle this thing." 8. Arn Anderson, *WCW Worldwide*: "A swat in the head is anticlimactic for what I've been through the last few months." 9. Cornette, *SMW*: "WCW's sure keeping the mortuary busy." 10. Chris Candido, *SMW*: "This ain't like WCW. I've done some awfully stupid things but I haven't fallen through any walls yet."

11. Larry Zbyszko, *WCW Main Event*, to Chris Cruise: "You don't need a crewcut. No one can grab what you've got left." 12. Cruise, *WME*: "Maybe they can get me the telephone number of that Hair Club for Men. Good luck with our staff." 13. Tony Schiavone/Heenan, *WCW Sat. Night*: (TS) "I would guess Larry Santo's from Tennessee." (BH) "He got his jacket from some Denny's." 14. Heenan, *Superbrawl*: "Double Thundercage and me—that's like finding out your aunt's sick and has a will." 15. Heenan, *Superbrawl*, on Gene Okerlund: "I don't think he's bald. He's just got a wide part." 16. Heenan, *Superbrawl*, on Equalizer's furry boots: "I like that fur. I think those are Hair Jordans."

Strangest Comments

1. Terry Funk, *The Real Wrestling Hotline*: "We didn't treat our profession as if it was a national treasure." 2. Funk, *TRWH*: "Who I hold for the downfall of wrestling is the wrestlers themselves. We've got to have some kind of moral standards or we better find some." 3. Tito Santana, *TRWH*, on McMahon's legal woes: "Just like Michael Jackson, he is guilty until proven innocent. I don't think that's fair." 4. Heenan, *Superbrawl*, on Cactus Jack-Maxx Payne vs. Nasty Boys: "How can you pick a winner. None of them can wrestle."

And the Rest....

BEST INTERVIEW: Ric Flair, *The Larry King Show*.

BEST SEGMENT: "Memphis Memories," *USWA*.

VIOLIN AWARD: Schiavone, *WCW Hotline*: "I have a painful back. I need surgery. I've been working hurt. Jim Ross was in the WCW office today. You draw your own conclusions."

BEST NAME: Ollie Muffler, announcer for WCW's German telecasts.

DREADED GLITCH AWARDS: 1. WCW, for not editing out Steve Regal *Worldwide* interview plugging his *Superbrawl* match with Davey Boy Smith two days before the pay-per-view. 2. WCW, for day-before *Superbrawl* editions of *Worldwide* featuring Okerlund urging people to watch the pay-per-view "tonight." 3. *Arsenio Hall Show*, for plugging Sting as "world heavyweight champion."

Review

Superbrawl: One Superbore

When you get to Match 5 in any pay-per-view cablecast and you're still waiting for the engine to be cranked, something is more seriously wrong than a bad night. Case in point: *Superbrawl IV*.

When the marquee event fails to offer enough to save the show, the time has come for serious headscratching. Case in point: *Superbrawl IV*.

Either plagued with poor structuring, weak matchups, or inexperienced talent, the first two hours of *Superbrawl* appeared on par with the average Sunday edition of *WCW Main Event* with slightly elevated production values. Whomever made the decision to allow Steve Regal and Arn Anderson go 27 minutes and leave only 11-and-a-half for Ric Flair-Vader should go for the same counseling Tonya Harding needs.

A review of key elements of the show:

MATCHES

Clearly, Jim Steele, Thunder and Lightning, Diamond Dallas Page and the Equalizer are not pay-per-view caliber performers. The show launched with an interminably-long angle to explain why Michael Hayes could not wrestle Johnny B. Badd and took 11 minutes for Nick Bockwinkel to rule Jimmy Garvin had to replace Hayes.

Why this organization continues to believe viewers and arena fans are enthralled with lengthy Regal bouts is a mystery. Technically, Regal is one of the best in the business. But when Arn Anderson cannot even lift the bout above boredom, a creative change has to be considered.

Flair-Vader needed a half-hour to build to a crescendo. Instead, the two were forced to play beat the clock with the satellite cutoff and moved to the climax before the story was developed.

The one salvation was the six-man tag match, which surprised many observers with a clean finish of Brian Pillman pinning Steve Austin. In years past, Pillman has been the designated job man with the big boys.

PRODUCTION

Perhaps the finest part of the production is one element which has been overlooked in most quarters: the opening. Flair has jealousy guarded his workouts. In 1989, prior to the classic first pay-per-view bout with Ricky Steamboat, Flair resisted attempts to tape his training sessions.

This one opened with nearly three minutes of Flair undergoing strenuous gym work and stairclimbing in an arena. The images were more impressive for a 46-year-old man than any behind-the-scenes buildup, short of the emotional *Starrcade* teaser.

Lighting was strong, graphics were accurate and decent locker room interviews were conducted until the end. Cameras spent so much time showing Ray Traylor handcuffed to the cage, much of the last five minutes of the Flair-Vader bout was lost to the home audience. Plus, these shows cry out for an interview with the main event winner. Eric Bischoff was shrewd enough to allot enough time for the emotional post-bout scene at *Starrcade*. However, this time, the crew was rushed to get off the air so we could see a longer credit roll than the one on ABC's *Heaven and Hell*.

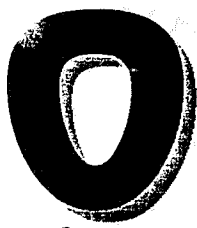
ANNOUNCING

Well, there was a gold medal performance and one which could be equated with former Olympians trying to return to figure skating wars.

Bobby Heenan slipped into his WCW role as color commentator as if it were a tailor-made shoe. Heenan's one-liners were smooth, yet not offen-

(Continued on Page 6)

Ross Recovers from Bell's Palsy



Only an act of God could have stilled the most dominant voice in pro wrestling of the last seven years. But Jim Ross is learning the value of his health. The 42-year-old Oklahoman and, until four weeks ago, the host of *WWF Wrestling Challenge* and *Radio WWF* is recovering from Bell's Palsy, a disease which creates a temporary paralysis of the facial muscles and creates sensations similar to stroke victims.

Under terms of his WWF contract, Ross cannot talk publicly with reporters without Titan Sports permission. But *Matwatch '94* has learned Ross will face at least two to three months of continuous physical therapy to fully recover. Ross managed to do the opening minute of an early February edition of *Challenge* and departed when sidekick Gorilla Monsoon told him he was being "summoned to the 'Face-to-Face' set." Ross never returned.

Jerry Lawler's Remarks To TV Viewers

(Ed.: The following is a transcript of Jerry Lawler's remarks to his television viewers on USWA Championship Wrestling Feb. 26, three days after being cleared of charges of rape and sodomy in Louisville, Ky.)

The support all throughout this thing was tremendous from everybody that knows me and has known me over my 23-year career. They, I think, knew all along that this was a fabricated story. I told everybody all along it was a fabricated story. Even the young lady came along and told them. Finally, we got the Commonwealth of Kentucky to realize it and admit that it was a fabricated story and all the charges were dropped.

I've faced in my career a lot of tough opponents, from Jos Le Duc to Terry Funk to Jackie Fargo, Bill Dundee, Eddie Gilbert....but, believe me, you don't know what it's like to go up against the prosecutor from the state of Kentucky. That's a tough opponent right there.

You talk about needing help and having some great tag team partners and I've had some great tag team partners over the years—Bill Dundee, Jackie Fargo, Brian Christopher. But in this particular battle, I had some of the greatest tag team partners ever assembled. I want to thank my Memphis attorney, William D. Massey, and my Louisville attorney, Tim Dennison. I wish you'd give them a round of applause (applause). These guys stuck with me and did a super job.

Everybody has come to me and said, "Are you gonna sue people and get them back?" I'm just so happy to have my name cleared....I'm not mad at anybody about this....even though we've been through an unfortunate situation. Throughout all of this, the young lady involved, who was pressured into making these statements to begin with, I want to thank her for coming forward and telling the truth on the situation. Even the prosecutors in the state of Kentucky, even though it seemed to drag out forever, they were just doing their job and doing what they thought was right. This is one of those things where there's really no bad guy. I just want to thank God up above and I'm just glad this is over.

Dr. Morris Fishbein says Bell's palsy is often preceded by a mild pain in the eye, ear or face. The paralysis often develops so abruptly, the person affected realizes it only by a feeling of numbness and stiffness on one side of the face. Within a few hours, the eye on that side is more widely open than the other, cannot be closed and excessively waters. The mouth is drawn over to the side of the face and speech is impaired. Other senses can be affected. In about 85-90 per cent of the cases, complete recovery ensues.

Ross is having electrical stimulation to the facial muscles, in addition to therapy. Cortisone is also considered effective in shortening the duration of the palsy. Dr. Fishbein says the toughest thing for victims is patience in recovery.

Speculation has flared (see *Headlines*, page 3) as to Ross's professional future in the last few weeks. His WWF contract expires at the end of the month. Ross is expected to announce his future plans in a matter of days.

Superbrawl Superbore

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sive. For a while, he appeared to lift Tony Schiavone above the mediocrity which has plagued him since reassuming the top host role after Jim Ross' departure.

However, Schiavone destroyed whatever credibility he kindled when, he continued to refer to every bout as a "great" match. Then, during the six-man tag bout, he exploded into his most vivid imagination: "But this entire evening has been great with some of the greatest competitors in the world: Thunder and Lightning, Harlem Heat, Jungle Jim Steele, Diamond Dallas Page...." This is the same organization which criticized Ross for calling too many weekly shows an "outstanding broadcast," but never did he vault into such mountains of false praise. Too often, late in the show, Schiavone deteriorated into a Vince McMahon barker-style but his higher-pitched yelling pales to McMahon and grows hoarse.

GRADES: Matches, D; Production, B+; Announcing, C+.

TOTAL SHOW GRADE: C-.

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